

Waterfront Planning Process- Public Forum #1

Thursday, April 23, 2009

My name is Jim Devlin and I am here speaking on behalf of the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership or AEDP and I live and work in Old Town.

The AEDP is excited to be here as we kick-off the Waterfront Small Area Plan, and we look forward to actively participating throughout the process. As the economic development organization focused on attracting and retaining businesses to the City of Alexandria, AEDP has identified the Waterfront as an important asset. In fact, AEDP's mission specifically mentions the waterfront:

The mission of the AEDP is to promote the City of Alexandria as a premier location for businesses by capitalizing on its assets including multiple Metro stations, historical character and riverfront location, in order to enhance the City's tax revenue and increase employment opportunities.

The Board and staff at AEDP are focused on the opportunity to move Alexandria forward as a smart City, attuned to the benefits of economic development while keeping a close eye on our special assets like the Waterfront. In recent years, Alexandria has lagged in its economic development, specifically in relation to our neighbors in the region. It's time, particularly in this economic downturn, to focus on Alexandria's economic future and truly capitalize on our assets.

The Mayor's Economic Sustainability Work Group recommendations also focused on the importance of the Waterfront. Since they were adopted by City Council in late 2007, the AEDP, in collaboration with our partners at the City and other economic development entities, has focused on implementing many of their recommendations. As they pertain to the Waterfront and economic development, the Work Group specifically said:

- Mixed-use vibrant development should be encouraged along the waterfront in the remaining opportunity parcels with commercial, retail, restaurant, arts and hotel development opportunities targeted;
- existing warehouse sites have high visibility and represent a major obstacle to completing the enhancement of the waterfront with world class redevelopment, so they need to be addressed in the process;
- water uses such as kayak and sailboat rental and additional marina slips should be encouraged;
- major existing docks should be maintained so that ships (such as the Coast Guard Eagle tall ship and small passenger ships) can still be accommodated;
- further expansion of water taxis and water shuttles should be encouraged;

- the food court at the City Marina should be rethought and revitalized; and
- if feasible, retail on South Union Street, the Strand and other areas should be expanded as part of the waterfront redevelopment plan.

The AEDP Board of Directors supports the Work Group's recommendations as well as of the preliminary goals outlined by the City staff.

We do call your attention, however, to our request to define more clearly the "Sustainable" goal, to better reflect the intent of the Work Group and other economic development entities. The Waterfront is an economic asset belonging to the entire City, and this particular goal should be amended to reflect this outlook.

The smart development and redevelopment of the Waterfront is a priority for AEDP and we have included related activities in our preliminary FY 2010 budget.

We believe that planning for the Waterfront should be forward-thinking, and embrace, not limit, opportunities that might present themselves in the future.

Thank you.